INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION :
DECEMBER 2, 1942 :

Washington, D.C.

THE MARKET BASKET
by
Bureau of Home Economics, Agricultural Research Administration
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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CITRUS FRUIT IN THE MARKET BASKET

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Save plenty of space for citrus fruits in your market basket this winter, suggests the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Grapefruit, oranges, and tangerines are going to town in a big way these days. The winter citrus crop from the three States of Florida, Texas, and Arizona promises to be of record size, and the crop of California navel oranges is large. Though more oranges than ever before will go into concentrates for shipping to our soldiers and allies, and more grapefruit will go into canned juice for shipping, too, the fresh fruit in large quantities will be for sale in retail markets from now on into the spring. Grapefruit and tangerines are a Victory Food Special, December 3 through December 12. Fresh citrus fruits have been placed under a temporary price ceiling, so consumers will find no appreciable change in price.

Citrus fruits well deserve the popularity that changed them from a rare holiday treat to an everyday regular in American meals. Oranges made the big shift after the last war in the 1920's. The average yearly crop during the period of the last war was about 20 million boxes. Today the average yearly crop of oranges is more than 80 million boxes. A family which before the last war bought oranges only about once a year for the children's Christmas stockings, probably had begun to use oranges for breakfast and dessert in the 1920's, and today considers them everyday

food. Grapefruit came into their big popularity much later than oranges--not until the late 1930's, in fact.

Citrus fruit is a "natural" for winter meals, coming as it does when other fresh fruit is scarce and bringing together appetite appeal, vitamin value and good keeping quality. Oranges and grapefruit contain several minerals and vitamins as well as other food values, but their most important contribution to the diet is probably vitamin C. They are one of the very richest sources of this vitamin which everyone needs every day. In winter--or whenever fresh fruits and vegetables are scarce--meals are likely to run low in this vitamin. The result is often such common winter ills as aches in bones and joints, a rundown feeling, lingering colds, or sore gums. Studies of vitamin C show that a large orange or a grapefruit a day will keep these vague ills away.

Army rations must contain plenty of vitamin C foods, and the citrus fruits are among those that our armed forces depend on. The British, cut off from the oranges from Spain and Africa, which they used to import by the shipload, are especially in need of the concentrated orange juice made from American oranges. Though the British people have been learning to use more of the vitamin C foods they can raise on their own soil--cabbages, black currants and rose hips, for example--recent visitors to England say a fresh orange in Britain today looks more tempting than gold to many people.

Every modern mother knows that the youngest of the family thrives on orange juice at a very early age. Babies today start taking orange juice when they are only a few weeks old and take more as they grow older. This is because milk is low in vitamin C and babies can't store this vitamin any more than older people can. They need a daily supply. Before mothers and physicians understood this, some babies suffered from scurvy for lack of vitamin C.

The very old as well as the very young thrive on citrus fruit. Old people, like younger people, need vitamin C. They often must avoid raw cabbage and other such foods rich in C. But most old people enjoy and can easily take citrus juice every day.

Though citrus fruits are plentiful this year, we must be careful not to waste this or any other good food in wartime. The whole fruit contains much more vitamin C than the juice, especially the strained juice. So in making the most of oranges and grapefruit, remember that slicing is more economical than squeezing and straining. Even the outer peel contains vitamin C. Use it for marmalade, relishes, and use grated peel to flavor desserts, biscuits and cookies.

Oranges and grapefruit are richer in vitamin C than tangerines which are also plentiful this year. But tangerines happen to be richer in vitamin A. We have the biggest crop of tangerines in our history. And these so-called "kid glove oranges" have the advantage of all the rest in being easier to eat and extra handy to take in a lunch box.

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